

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fiscal Year 2009

Emergency responses increased again this year, by 2.2%. EMS emergencies increased by 2.3% to 3,945 and fire calls increased by 1.8% to 1,390. Once again, we responded to more than 5,000 emergencies and our staffing levels were reduced. There were no fire fatalities or civilian injuries, but 29 firefighters were injured during these incidents. Our Fire Prevention construction inspection and plan review efforts were crippled in FY 09 due to the absence of the Fire Prevention Captain. The Assistant Chief who supervises Fire Prevention programming also functions as the Town's Emergency Manager (Civil Defense Director) and also supervises the Fire Department's Emergency Medical Services.

We continue to have three major concerns relative to our ability to deliver quality EMS and fire safety services to Amherst's citizens. First, the number of simultaneous emergency incidents that occur on a daily basis strip our on-duty forces to zero. In these circumstances we need to rely upon off-duty career firefighters to respond back to the Central Fire Station during the normal workweek, and we depend upon call and student volunteer firefighters to provide coverage nights and weekends. Such situations can only be solved by increasing the number of career firefighters on duty to a minimum of nine or ten per shift. We continue to have the smallest career force in the state for our population range. The second major issue is the high injury rate to our firefighters – the highest in the state. This also relates to the call volume per firefighter ratio, also the highest in the state. Our final concern relates to response times of ambulances and fire apparatus to South Amherst (as much as thirteen [13] minutes). This exceeds the national standards for emergency medicine and fire suppression service delivery in some cases by a factor of more than two (2). This situation only can be rectified by adding a fire station in South Amherst, as the physical shape of Amherst and the location of our population centers and target hazards elsewhere in Town dictates the present locations of the Central Fire Station and the North Fire Station.

We continued to receive benefits from a \$500,000 federal grant (SAFER) received in November 2005, which added five (5) new firefighter/paramedic positions to our Department. This grant gradually requires Amherst to assume more of the salary burden over five years (this year the federal government paid 25% of the salaries). In FY 08, we received another federal SAFER Act grant for \$181,000 for three years to assist in the recruitment and retention of call and volunteer firefighters. This grant partially pays for a call firefighter to supervise the grant, reimburses the Town for emergency medical technician courses and fire science courses for the volunteer and call firefighters, reimburses the Town for expenses related to volunteer firefighter parking fees at UMass, provides for travel and course fees for 15 volunteer and call firefighters to the National Fire Academy in Maryland and assists with stationary firefighter recruiting modems at the colleges and at the High School.

In terms of personnel changes, Captain Jennifer Sell and the Town are awaiting her disability retirement from the Commonwealth's PERAC Board. Firefighter/paramedic Joshua Shanley resigned to pursue other interests and was replaced with Matthew Sposito. We continue to have 31 paramedics on staff who continue to provide the premier Advanced Life Support service in Western Massachusetts.

Our SAFE (Student Awareness of Fire Education) program in the schools completed another successful year under the guidance of Captains Tim Goodhind and John Ingram. This program has been touted by the State Fire Marshal's Office as one of the best in the Commonwealth. Amherst Fire personnel continue to seek ways to improve it each year, such as the 2nd Annual Pancake Breakfast to raise funds to help support the program.

Captains McKay and Olmstead continued to coordinate the tactical paramedic team, which interfaces with Amherst, State and UMass police at civil disobedience events where immediate medical assistance may be needed under less than ideal situations. This program has five firefighter/paramedics who are specially trained to render emergency medical care to police and citizens under fire, an outgrowth of the Columbine High School tragedy.

The Department's Technical Rescue Team, led by Captain Sterling and comprised of ten career firefighters, continues to improve their capabilities to handle confined space, high angle, collapse and other technical rescues each year. In FY 10, we will acquire trench rescue equipment through the budget process.

Assistant Chief Zlogar and firefighter/paramedic Shanley led the Department's wilderness search and rescue team.

The Town and the firefighter's union joint Fire Training Committee and EMS Training Committee continue to provide excellence in continuing education and incident reviews in the fire suppression and EMS fields.

Firefighter/paramedic Stephen Gaughan assumed control of the Department's child fire-setter intervention group. Captain Johnson and firefighters Tebo and Gaughan comprise the Fire Department component of the Town's Fire Investigation Unit, along with a state police trooper and two Amherst police officers.

Firefighter/paramedic Martell continued in his role as the Department's representative to TRIAD to assist with installing signs for the "What's Your Number" project. Over 1700 homes and businesses now have street number signs posted in front yards to allow police and fire personnel to find them quicker in an emergency.

Assistant Chief Zlogar is the Town's Emergency Manager (formerly Civil Defense Director). He is responsible to coordinate Homeland Security issues for the Town and to interface with the three colleges with regards to their own internal plans.

Captain Theilman, firefighter Adair and firefighter/paramedic Szewczynski continue in their capacity as our mechanics, under the direction of Assistant Chief Stromgren, to do as much vehicle maintenance and repairs in-house as possible, saving the Town thousands of dollars repairing our vehicle fleet, which numbers 25 vehicles and 6 specialty trailers.

Assistant Chief Zlogar and firefighter/paramedics Roy, Martell and Bascomb are members of the state Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team, quartered in Chicopee. This team responds to all hazardous materials emergencies in Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties with equipment provided by the Commonwealth.

Our call and student volunteer firefighters continue to function as a critical element of our Fire Department. We could not provide the superior level of emergency services for the Town without them, especially when all of our career on-duty members are committed to emergencies.

Amherst continues to have the smallest career firefighter contingent in the state for our population range (28,000-40,000) and is one of the busiest Departments in terms of emergency responses and fire prevention activities. Every year the workload increases yet the staffing decreases due to shrinking budgetary allocations for overtime to staff at levels higher than 7 personnel on-duty. Statewide and

national statistics suggest that we should have a minimum of 16 staff on duty. The increasing number of simultaneous emergency calls is presenting a public safety crisis when we have few, if any, resources remaining to answer the next call. Town Manager Shaffer has been able to secure additional funding for fire/EMS services from the University and Amherst College, and is engaging Hampshire College officials in meaningful talks surrounding a similar payment. We hope this leads to increased support for the Fire Department so that minimum staffing can be increased without relying upon Amherst taxpayers to do so.

Amherst’s citizens continue to practice fire safety as the frequency of incidents and injuries is lower than the statewide average for our peer communities. Medical emergencies continue to tax our ability to maintain a sufficient fire force readily available for the immediate response to a fire in progress in a structure. Amherst firefighters are to be congratulated for their unwavering dedication to duty, ensuring the public safety each day with regards to fire suppression, inspection and safety education duties, and maintaining high standards to deliver quality emergency medical care to Hadley, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury as well as here in Amherst.

Reports on fire and inspection statistics, emergency medical services, Department training, and the Call and Student Forces follow. This material was authored by Assistant Chiefs Mike Zlogar and Lindsay Stromgren, Captain Tim Goodhind, and Call Deputy Chief Edward Mientka, Jr.

As this will be my final Annual Report as Fire Chief, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the citizens of Amherst for their support over the years. In addition, other Town Departments including the School Department, worked cooperatively with us to deliver services to Amherst, the colleges and other communities in their or our time of need. Finally – to the men and women of the Amherst Fire Department – I was proud and honored to lead and represent you for ten years. Truly you are the most dedicated and professional contingent of firefighters and medical practitioners in the Commonwealth.

Respectfully submitted,
 Keith E. Hoyle, Fire Chief

6 YEAR STATISTICAL RECORD

	<u>FY 09</u>	<u>FY 08</u>	<u>FY 07</u>	<u>FY 06</u>	<u>FY 05</u>	<u>FY 04</u>
EMS RESPONSES	3945	3856	3780	3556	3340	3339
FIRE RESPONSES	1390	1366	1351	1254	1358	1367
TOTAL	5335	5222	5131	4810	4698	4706

FIRES:

Structure:.....61
 Vehicle:.....7
 Rubbish:.....36
 Brush:.....10
Other:.....16

Subtotal – Fires130

RESCUE: (includes vehicle accidents)180

HAZARDOUS CONDITION:100

FALSE ALARMS:

Malicious alarm:43
 System Malfunction:.....260
 Unintentional:506
 Good Intent Call:26
 Bomb Scare:.....1
Other False alarms:.....14

Subtotal – False Alarms850

SERVICE CALL:41

OTHER CALLS:89

TOTAL FY 09 FIRE RESPONSES:.....1,390

TYPE of ALARMS

STILL ALARMS:.....1,133	RESCUE/VEHICLE ACCIDENT:180
BOX ALARMS:54	OTHER:.....6
RECALLS:0	Mutual Aid <u>TO</u> other communities:17
STATION COVERAGE*:139	Mutual Aid <u>FROM</u> other communities:0

*Station coverage includes off-duty Career Firefighters and Call Firefighters being summoned when on-duty firefighters are committed to emergency calls
 - does not include nightly coverage by the Student Force during the academic year.

FIRE LOSSES & CASUALTIES

FIRE DOLLAR LOSSES: (includes contents)

Buildings & other structures \$143,735
 Vehicles & other equipment \$24,800
Other \$94,150
 TOTAL \$262,685

CIVILIAN FIRE INJURIES.....1

CIVILIAN FIRE FATALITIES0

FIREFIGHTER INJURIES*29

*Includes all Fire Department personnel injuries including those from EMS calls & Training.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS continues as the component that generates the majority of our emergency traffic, and again in FY 09, we increased our responses to 3,945 responses, an increase of 2.3% over FY 08. With our new federal SAFER grant hires, we continue to have 31 career firefighter/paramedics, more than any other western Massachusetts Fire Department.

We continue to provide EMS to Hadley, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury, and these communities (along with UMass) pay a per resident fee to us for this service. Just over 27% of our total EMS activity goes to non-Amherst communities and the additional stipend charges to non-Amherst responses enacted in FY 06 continue to increase revenue collection in this regard. The Town Manager is aggressively pursuing additional revenue sources with regards to EMS charges.

Often we can staff only 3 ambulances simultaneously. Only 62% of the time or less can we staff 4 ambulances with on-duty personnel. Nearly 40% of our total EMS calls required some sort of advanced life support (ALS) intervention. This is consistent with our experience since we expanded to ALS care over two decades ago.

Our fifth ambulance finally was equipped with ALS paramedic gear during FY 08. During the workweek, we now re-call career staff to back-fill the station when all on-duty staff is committed to emergencies, so the possibility of utilizing the fifth ambulance for ALS calls has increased.

Department EMTs, Intermediates and Paramedics train continuously during the year to maintain state certifications for the EMT level to which they are certified. Personnel take advantage of coursework sponsored within the Fire Department and from outside sources depending upon budgetary commitments. An EMS Training Committee was created by the bargaining agreement between Local 1764 IAFF and the Town and this Committee has been very active at establishing training plans and curriculums for skill and knowledge improvements. The Field Training Program for new paramedics, EMT-I's and EMT-Bs was re-written to provide for more directed training supervised by experienced paramedic mentors.

The Fire Department has been working with the Amherst Police and other area Police Departments to provide first aid and defibrillator training for area first responders. We also are providing this training in the schools and other Town Departments.

FY 09 EMS RESPONSES

Amherst:	2013
Belchertown:	29
Hadley:	847
Leverett:	71
Northampton:	2
Other:	3
Pelham:	61
Shutesbury:	55
Sunderland:	10
Amherst College:	74
Hampshire College:	79
UMass:	701

Total Responses: **3945**

Amherst Fire Department

Annual report of activity for period 7/1/2008 - 6/30/2009

By Town	Fire	%	EMS	%
Amherst	1372	98.7	2867	72.7
Belchertown	1	.1	29	.7
Hadley	6	.4	847	21.5
Leverett	2	.1	71	1.8
Northampton	7	.5	2	.1
Other	0	.0	3	.1
Pelham	1	.1	61	1.5
Shutesbury	0	.0	55	1.4
Sunderland	1	.1	10	.3
TOTALS	1390		3945	

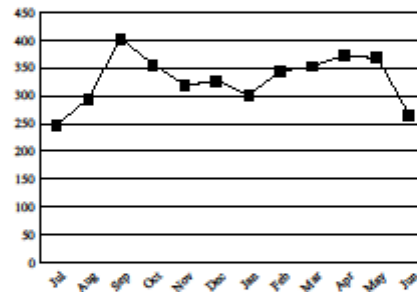
These are the totals for Amherst with the colleges removed.

	Fire	EMS
Amherst (only)	896	2013
Amherst College	68	74
Hampshire College	163	79
UMASS	245	701

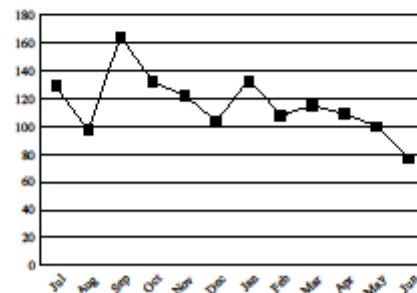
By Month	Mutual Aid EMS into Amherst
Jul	3
Aug	4
Sep	11
Oct	1
Nov	7
Jan	6
Feb	11
Mar	6
Apr	4
May	10
Jun	6
TOTALS	69

By Month	Fire	%	EMS	%
Jul	129	9.3	246	6.2
Aug	98	7.1	293	7.4
Sep	164	11.8	402	10.2
Oct	132	9.5	356	9.0
Nov	122	8.8	319	8.1
Dec	103	7.4	327	8.3
Jan	133	9.6	300	7.6
Feb	108	7.8	344	8.7
Mar	115	8.3	353	8.9
Apr	109	7.8	372	9.4
May	100	7.2	368	9.3
Jun	77	5.5	265	6.7
TOTALS	1390		3945	

EMS calls only (by month)



Fire incidents only (by month)



Fire Prevention & Inspection

Although the number of new construction projects decreased, the activity in the time required for plan reviews, permits, inspections, job meeting and consultation did not decrease. Projects permitted in the previous fiscal year continued into this fiscal year. Changes in the codes, laws, standards are increasing responsibilities and requiring more time for inspections and consultations during the project planning phase and during construction.

The assignment of Captain Klaus to the Fire Prevention program terminated in May, which has impacted the ability to stay up to date with plan reviews, inspections and reports.

The on-duty crews conduct the inspections in homes, places of assembly, schools and health care facilities. Firefighters have been hired for extra duty to conduct inspections for occupancy and licensing that involve a high number of inspections in a short period of time such as inspecting restaurants, facilities holding liquor licenses and the fraternities and sororities.

Service Levels

The Department is providing a high level of service to residents, contractors, designers, architects and engineers. Besides the actual inspections we try and maintain our availability for meetings and consultations and have conducted inspections every day of the week, and hour of the day, with the exception of Saturday night and Sundays.

Plan review is an important part of the inspection and permitting process. On many projects, the plan review process begins during the design phase. Reviews are done for Zoning and Planning applications, providing feedback about fire safety items. We first review concept drawings, then 60% drawings and the bid set. The construction drawings are reviewed as part of the Building Permit Application process. Participation in design review of proposed projects and attending job meeting during construction enables us to identify and problems early in the process so corrections can be made when the work can be done easier and more cost effective. Our regular involvement in the construction process improves the close-out and final inspection phase allowing completion and occupancy on time.

Contractors installing fire protection systems and equipment submit shop drawings for their work, which are reviewed as part of the Fire Department permit process. Multiple “rough” inspections are conducted for all systems during construction. Although this a time consuming activity, working with installing contractors and designers during installation helps ensure the installation is correct and is completed on time. The early and regular involvement helps the contractor avoid expensive correction and change orders.

More inspections are conducted jointly with the building and health inspectors in an effort to improve coordination among inspectors, avoid duplication of efforts, provide better communication with the owners and increase effectiveness.

Town inspectors attempt to meet each Thursday to track and review project status. Inspectors meet for 2-4 hours each week to improve communication and coordination concerning job progress.

The Town web site is being used to assist owners, contractors and designers with the permitting process by posting information and templates.

Code & Standards

The 7th edition of the State Building Code became effective this year. This edition is based on different model, the International Code Commission. New editions of the National Fire Protection Association standards also became effective. The implementation of the new codes and standards required attendance at seminars and hours of study. The systems installed to the provisions of the standards are employing new technologies. Additional training is required to understand the design and operations of the systems, to be able properly review plans and submittals and to learn inspection and test methodologies.

Program Development

The Town implemented the Permit and Code Enforcement Module of the MUNIS program. The development and “fine tuning” of the program has required a considerable investment of time reviewing our current practices and procedures and creating the computer-based applications. The program promises to improve recordkeeping and access to inspection and permit records but requires additional time to make entries.

Statistics

The first section lists the categories of inspection and permit activity. The statistics cannot capture the hours invested in each project. A significant amount of time is spent in telephone calls and consultations before permits are issued and inspections conducted. The Department does not have a method to track the number of meetings and the hours invested in each meeting, consultation, design review or job meeting

The second report lists the commercial projects in which we have been involved. The chart indicates the fire protection systems in the project and the number of permits issued. Many of the larger projects have durations of more than one year. Permits are issued at the start of the project. The inspections and job meetings continue until the fire protection systems are tested and accepted and the project is closed out.

FY 09 FIRE PREVENTION STATISTICS

Building Code and Construction

Construction Plan Reviews

1 and 2 family residential.....	34
Commercial and multi-family.....	19
Amherst College	6
Hampshire College.....	3
University of Massachusetts	25

Life Safety Inspections

Restaurants	54
Fraternity and Sororities	33
Health Care facilities.....	15
Nursing and Rest Homes	6
Public Schools.....	31
Private Schools.....	24
Childcare	23
Public Assembly, Inns and Theaters	29
Public Buildings.....	4
Elder Housing	22
Other Buildings	3
Temporary Use of Building for Assembly (Chapter 304)	10

Inspections and Permits

Home Inspections (Chapter 148, s26F and new construction)	300
Multi-Family Dwellings (Chapter 148, s26C)	3
Oil Burner Installations.....	123
LPG Installations	67
Underground Storage Tank Removals.....	10
Underground Storage Tank.....	0
Aboveground Storage Tank Installations.....	0
Fuel Storage Facilities.....	12
Tank Truck Inspections.....	0
Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Displays	4
MGL Chapter 148 Permits for Storage and Use of Flammables	303
Open Burning Permits, Residential, Agricultural & Forestry.....	413

Public Education Programs

Open House.....	1
SAFE.....	60
Community Programs	15

FIRE TRAINING

During FY 09 we continued to complete as much Fire & Rescue training as possible given the limited amount of free time available. While Call & Student firefighters have regularly-scheduled weekly drills, the full-time firefighters must do most of their training between emergency calls. The increase in call volume, combined with a net decrease in available personnel, creates an obstacle to completing effective training while on duty. This, combined with the loss of an administrative captain's position which was overseeing training, has hampered our efforts to increase training for all personnel. This is unfortunately reflected in our recent ISO (Insurance Services Office) evaluation which was conducted in FY 09 and released in FY 10. The evaluation, while overall very good for the department, lists training as one of the areas that is in need of improvement.

Training done outside of normal shift hours continues to be one of the most productive means to accomplish needed training, although more costly. As in past years, members of all three forces (Permanent, Call & Student) were again able to take advantage of course offerings from both the Massachusetts and National Fire Academies. Eighteen department members traveled to the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland in October for a weekend of training on a variety of subjects. Much of the expense of these courses was covered by a federal SAFER grant for training and recruitment of Call and Volunteer firefighters. A number of department members attended classes sponsored by the Massachusetts Fire Academy, both at their Stow, Massachusetts training facility and at regional offerings in local communities.

Twenty new student firefighters along with sixteen returning student firefighters completed the annual week of basic training in early September. The week included two trips to the Springfield Fire Academy for live fire training.

Members of our specialized rescue teams also conducted their own drills throughout the year, including the quarterly, day-long drills for the Technical Rescue team.

In the spring of 2009, a number of department members participated in a large scale disaster drill at the University of Massachusetts. This drill dealt with the handling of a large number of patients from a chemical accident and included the deployment of our Mass Decontamination Trailer.

During the upcoming year, we will strive to complete as much training as practical on both new techniques and technology, as well as to review basic skills to maintain proficiency.

CALL FORCE

The Amherst Fire Department Call Force is a branch of the Fire Department that serves to augment the Department's Career Force. Call Force members are trained and available to respond to an immediate fire emergency or may be called to the station when full time career resources are committed to fire or emergency medical calls. During FY 09, the Call Force was dispatched to a total of 92 emergency calls. These included 52 box alarms and 40 other calls which included fire alarm activations, motor vehicle accidents, and emergency medical incidents. In addition, the Call Force was called into the station 63 times to provide fire suppression coverage for the Town. While in service, the Call Force was dispatched to 25 emergency calls.

Fire apparatus primarily assigned to the Call Force in FY 09 was our 1988 LTI 105' aerial platform (Ladder 1), and a 1999 KME pumper (Engine 4). Three new members, Clifford Wilkinson, Ari Kasal, Nafis Azad were hired, completed our recruit training program and obtained response authorization. At the close of the fiscal year, the Call Force had 20 members of which 9 were Mass certified Emergency Medical Technicians, 10 were qualified pump operators, and 8 were qualified operators of our aerial platform. Firefighter Bill Webster was promoted to lieutenant.

Call Force members were proud to again assist with the Department's annual National Fire Prevention Week Open House, the annual Student Awareness for Fire Safety Education (SAFE) graduation, and fire protection during Winterfest fireworks display. Other services included assisting with sprinkler system acceptance testing, staffing for snow emergencies, conducting open burning inspections, and permit processing.

In addition to routine weekly training, specialized courses included: ice rescue, courses at the National Firefighting Academy in Maryland, and assisting with live burn exercises at the Springfield Firefighting Academy. Many members participated in live burn exercises at a donated burn house at 28 Cows Road and our recruits attended courses through Hampshire County Fire Defense Association.

Special Notation: The Amherst Fire Dept. Call Force, The Ledyard Volunteer Fire Company, friends and family experienced deep sadness with the passing of dedicated member and dear friend Lt. David Pollack PhD on December 11, 2009. He is truly missed and will not be forgotten.

STUDENT VOLUNTEER FORCE

Thirty student volunteer firefighters, mostly from UMass, continued to augment our career and call firefighters. During FY 09, 8 students lived at the North Fire Station, and the students had their pumper in-service at the station 113 hours a week (Monday-Friday: 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. - Fridays at 6:00 p.m. continuously until Mondays at 7:00 a.m.). The remainder of the week, they are on-call similar to our call and off-duty career firefighters.

The students responded to 198 fire runs during FY 09, up 4.7% from last year. Their training is similar to that of our call firefighters. On daily shifts, training occurs for 90 minutes, with the entire student contingent training every Thursday night for 3 hours. We do not expect that they will function at the same level as our career professionals (as they are not paramedics and most are not EMTs, they cannot staff an ambulance,) but they perform a critical primary service and sometimes arrive first at emergency calls, including fires, as occurred a handful of times during the year. In these instances, it is important that they carry out their duties and control the incident until other help can arrive. Consistently they have performed well for us.

Student firefighters staff one pumper and during actual fires, also respond with a squad truck and extra self-contained breathing apparatus, spare air cylinders and firefighter rehabilitation supplies. They maintain our Command Board (accounts for locations of firefighters inside buildings) and usually bring an ambulance and a squad to the scene with extra personnel as well to perform ancillary services.

Student firefighters attended other training facilities in addition the instruction received here. Some of those sites were the State Firefighting Academy in Stow, the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the Springfield Fire Department Training Center.

In April, 23 new student firefighters began training to replace graduating seniors for FY 09. We should start FY 10 with somewhere around 39 students, but certainly will lose some to attrition, as we always do. Whatever factors prompt students to elect to try to perform this public service often is tempered during the 72 hour "Wonder Week" training that occurs one week before the college semester begins in September. Usually a half dozen or so students decide not to continue in the program and drop out during "Wonder Week," or choose not to return at all.

Most remain with us, and some do go on to choose the fire service as their profession, as evidenced by the 15 former graduates alone who now are career firefighters in Amherst as well as current Massachusetts Fire Chiefs in Athol, Westborough and Amherst (all three career chief officers in Amherst are also student force graduates).

We look forward to another successful year with our student volunteer firefighters, as they have provided to the Town every year since the program's inception in 1953.